2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

There were no tribal wars during my stay at Sharjah, one of the reasons for this being the shortage of ammunition. The sheikhs are allowed a small ration of ammunition for defence against desert raiders, but this is insufficient for purposes of war. The Arabs were obliged to find other means of obtaining bullets. Thefts from the R.A.F. and American camps were frequent, and on one occasion several thousand rounds were stolen. The culprits were never caught, but some of the ammunition was later traced to the private armoury of a local sub-sheikh. Condemned ammunition stocks provide another source of supply. When the R.A.F. dumped a hundred cases of condemned .303 bullets into the creek, Arab pearl divers who had been waiting in readiness plunged into the water and brought most of it ashore.

In the heart of the desert, away from towns or villages, the shortage of ammunition often proves a hardship to the tribes, who rely on their rifles for much of their food supplies. They are thus obliged to manufacture their own cartridges, filling them with a home-made gunpowder obtained from the *ashgar* bush, the stems of which contain saltpetre. It is not a very satisfactory preparation, and many of the hunters have blown themselves up, but that has not proved a deterrent.

The Arab is a born fighter; as a child he learns to handle the curved *hangar*, or dagger, and to shoot gazelle with the silver damascened rifle which his father stole from the British. They are good shots, cunning in guerilla warfare; they will lie flat on their bellies, half-hidden by the scrub, and approach their enemies like snakes. Unfortunately they take very poor care of their arms; their rifles become corroded and clogged with dirt and are apt to explode in their faces when fired. Yet their daring tactics and fanaticism make them a formidable fighting force, and the sheikhs' armies, recruited from amongst the wild tribesmen, would prove a serious obstacle even to trained modern armies if the Arabs were united.

As long as the present sheikhs are in power, and the British Residency Agent, the Khan Bahadur Abdur bin Razzak (who has retired to his estates at Quait since this was written), exercises authority at Sharjah, tribal war is unlikely to break out on the Trucial Oman coast. The Khan Bahadur controls a large body of Arab spies in every town, hamlet and camp, and the slightest whisper of a revolt reaches him with little delay. In any event, war between the town sheikhs, who are for the most part related